

French Airbus prosecutor to join US law firm

Sam Fry
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Credit: Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan

Eric Russo, the prosecutor who led the French part of a multi-agency corruption investigation into aircraft manufacturer Airbus, is set to join the Parisian white-collar practice of US law firm Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan.

The firm announced the move on 12 October, stating that Russo upon joining will be the first lawyer to leave the National Financial Prosecutor's Office (PNF) for private practice.

Quinn Emanuel said Russo will formally leave the PNF on 31 October and is expected to start at the firm in early December. The move to private practice comes after two decades in the French government and five years with the PNF where Russo led the agency's most high-profile cases, including [a tax evasion investigation into HSBC](#), as well as bribery probes [into Société Générale](#) and Airbus.

The Airbus case resulted in the company reaching the [largest ever foreign bribery settlement](#) with French, UK and US authorities in January – paying a total of €3.6 billion (\$3.9 billion) to resolve corruption allegations in 16 countries. In the French portion of the settlement, the High Court of Paris approved a €2.08 billion judicial public interest agreement between the PNF and Airbus.

Russo [told GIR in March](#) that the PNF would be filing charges against individuals implicated in the Airbus investigation “in the very near future”. None of the involved authorities has publicly announced charges against any individuals yet.

Quinn Emanuel said it hired Russo because of the reputation that he built during the Airbus investigation as a lawyer who works well with foreign regulators and prosecutors.

“He has an outstanding reputation in France and around the world for his expertise in complex financial investigations and white-collar matters,” said Los Angeles-based managing partner John Quinn in an emailed statement. “Eric is another example of Quinn Emanuel recruiting the best talent.”

Partner Kami Haeri, who heads the firm's white-collar practice in Paris, said Russo was introduced to the firm by a “mutual friend”.

Russo said in an emailed statement that he is pleased to join a law firm that is “one of the most recognised in the world”.

A spokesperson for the PNF did not respond to a request for comment.

Quinn has in the past spoken of [the firm's "opportunistic" expansion strategy](#). As part of this strategy, the firm recruited former head of anti-corruption at the UK Serious Fraud Office Robert Amaee to its London office in 2016. Amaee has since [left the firm](#) to set up a boutique specialising in anti-corruption matters.

More recently, the firm saw [the departure of partner Sandra Moser](#), a former acting fraud section chief at the Department of Justice's criminal division, who rejoined Morgan Lewis & Bockius in September. She had initially joined Quinn Emanuel [straight out of government](#) in early 2019.

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